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First Students from St. Vincent and Albania attend NAVSCOLEOD

The first international students from the island chain of St. Vincent and the Grenadines and the country of Albania to attend the Naval School of Explosive Ordnance Disposal (NAVSCOLEOD) began their six-month course of study Aug. 2.

The students, Petty Officer 3rd Class Damian Franklyn, a member of the St. Vincent Coast Guard, and Capt. Vladimir Pica, from the Albanian Army, joined 23 other international class members from countries including Italy, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Turkey, Peru, Canada, Poland, Sweden, Kyrgyzstan, Lithuania, Singapore and Latvia.

"When I did the research, I realized this is a unique and challenging school," said Franklyn. "And I like challenges!"

During their first day at NAVSCOLEOD, the students were given an overview of what to expect over the next several months of EOD training by Billy Martin, NAVSCOLEOD's international military student officer (IMSO).

"I cannot stress enough the importance of study hall and accountability while attending NAVSCOLEOD," said Martin. "NAVSCOLEOD represents one

of the most academically challenging training sites in the Department of Defense. NAVSCOLEOD trains International Military Students (IMS) to the same academic standards as U.S. students. These countries have sent their best to NAVSCOLEOD to succeed and we expect only their best efforts."

The students were informed of some of the challenges they will face throughout their time at school, as well as the seriousness of the course, including the attrition rate which stands at around 33 percent for all students, both international and DoD.

More than 125 international students attend NAVSCOLEOD each year from 98 partner nations, and are taught many of the same topics received by U.S. students throughout their course of study.

While enrolled at NAVSCOLEOD, the international students get to experience American culture firsthand by interacting with local area residents.

"This is a new experience," added Franklyn. "The people here are very friendly. It makes me feel welcome. I expect to become an EOD Tech -- there are graduates every year and I can be one of them."

NAVSCOLEOD, located on Eglin Air Force Base, Fla. provides high-risk, specialized, basic and advanced EOD training to more than 2,200 U.S. and partner nation military and selected U.S. government personnel each year.

For more information about the Naval School of Explosive Ordnance and Diving, visit the NAVSCOLEOD website:

<https://www.netc.navy.mil/centers/ceneoddive/eods/>.

Additional information on the Naval Education and Training Command can be found at the NETC website: <https://www.netc.navy.mil>.

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Story by Ensign Elizabeth Allen, CENEODD Public Affairs Officer